

## Outbreak Brief #62: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

Date of Issue: 23 March 2021

**123,011,381 cases and 2,711,336 deaths**

*Data sources: World Health Organization and African Union Member States*

**Outbreak Update:** Since the last brief (16 March 2021), 3,398,813 new confirmed<sup>1</sup> coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases and 61,287 new deaths have been reported globally. To date, a total of 123,011,381 COVID-19 cases and 2,711,336 related deaths (case fatality rate (CFR): 2.2%) have been reported from 225 countries and territories. The distribution of cumulative cases (proportion of global cases) from the World Health Organization (WHO) reporting regions (excluding Africa) are as follows: Eastern Mediterranean Region 6,027,434 (5%), European Region 42,674,788 (35%), Region of the Americas 54,127,466 (44%), South-East Asia Region 14,236,990 (12%) and Western Pacific Region 1,787,434 (1%). Over the last seven days, Brazil, France, India, Italy, Poland, Turkey and the United States have each reported more than 100k new cases. For more detailed information on cases and deaths being reported outside of Africa, refer to the WHO daily situation reports.<sup>2</sup>

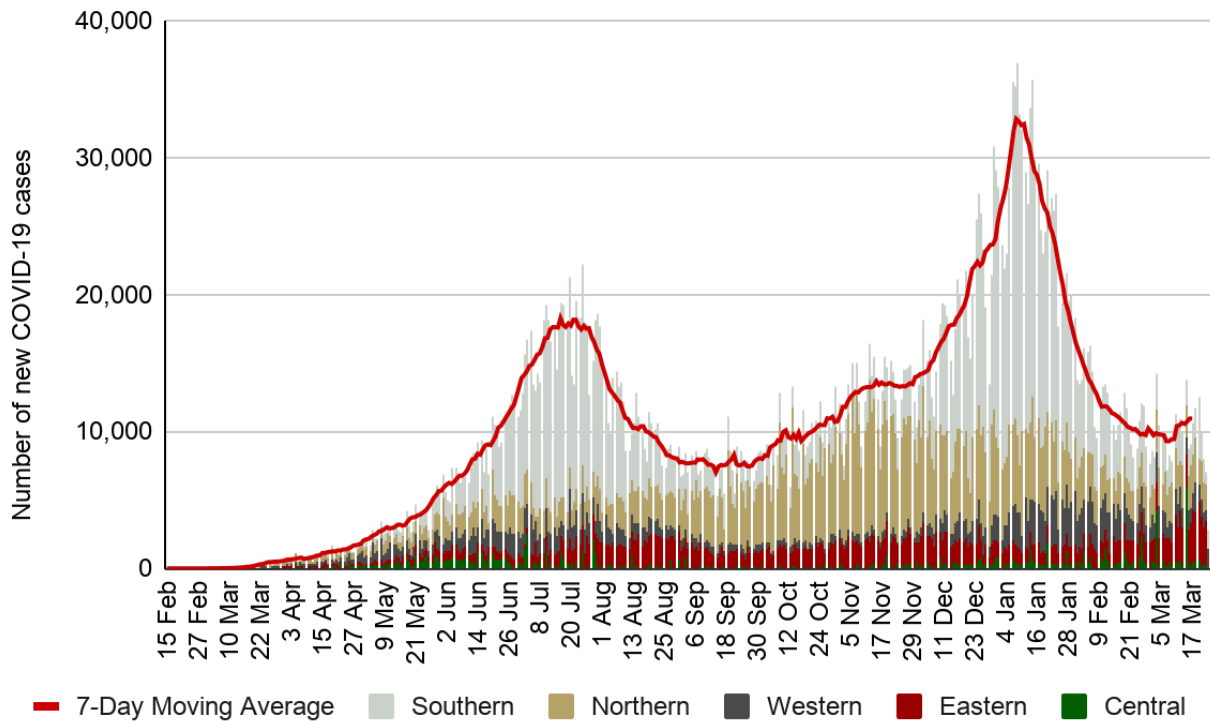
**As of 9 am East African Time (EAT) 23 March 2021,** a total of 4,123,632 COVID-19 cases and 110,164 deaths (CFR: 2.7%) have been reported in 55 African Union (AU) Member States. This is 4% of all cases reported globally. The majority (95%) of Member States continue to report community transmission. Of the countries actively reporting COVID-19 epidemiologic data, 21 are reporting case fatality rates higher than the global case fatality rate of 2.2%: Sahrawi Republic (11.3%), Sudan (6.4%), Egypt (5.9%), Somalia (4.3%), Liberia (4.2%), Zimbabwe (4.1%), Comoros (4.0%), Mali (3.9%), Eswatini (3.9%), Niger (3.6%), Chad (3.6%), Tunisia (3.5%), South Africa (3.4%), Malawi (3.3%), Gambia (3.1%), Lesotho (2.9%), Senegal (2.7%), DR Congo (2.6%), Mauritania (2.5%), Algeria (2.4%) and Angola (2.4%).

Currently, 16 Member States are reporting the presence of the **501Y.V1 variant (lineage B.1.1.7)**<sup>3</sup> Algeria, Angola, DR Congo, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo and Tunisia. Seventeen Member States are reporting the presence of the **501Y.V2 variant (B.1.351)**: Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Comoros, DR Congo, Eswatini, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

<sup>1</sup> WHO COVID-19 surveillance guidance and case definition: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/who-2019-nCoV-surveillanceguidance-2020.7>

<sup>2</sup> WHO coronavirus disease (COVID-19) dashboard: <https://covid19.who.int/>

<sup>3</sup> Also described as VOC 202012/01



**Figure 1: New COVID-19 cases reported by day in Africa by African Union region, 15 February 2020 - 23 March 2021.**

Figure 1 shows the trend of new COVID-19 cases reported by day from 15 February 2020 to 23 March 2021. Between epi weeks 8 - 10, the epicurve trended downward to the level reported in October 2020. However, in the past epi week, the curve has begun to trend upward.

**For Epi week 11 (15 - 21 March 2021),** 70,803 new COVID-19 cases have been reported, which is a 6% increase in the number of new cases reported compared to Epi week 10. The majority of new COVID-19 cases being reported for this week are from the Eastern region (33%) followed by the Northern (26%), Southern (23%), Western (13%) and Central (3%) regions. This week, seven countries account for about 64% of the new COVID-19 cases reported: Ethiopia (17%), South Africa (12%), Kenya (11%), Libya (9%), Egypt (6%), Tunisia (5%) and Morocco (4%). The countries reporting the highest incidence (COVID-19 new cases per 100,000 population) this week include Seychelles (455), Botswana (107), Libya (93), and Cabo Verde (65). Table 1 lists the reported COVID-19 cases and deaths by Member State in Africa for epi week 10 and the current phase of the epidemic for each country.

**Table 1. Confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths<sup>4</sup> reported in Africa for epi week 11 (15 March 2021 - 21 March 2021)**

Country	Number of cases (new)	Percent change in new cases since previous brief	Number of deaths (new)	Percent change in new deaths since previous brief	Epidemic phase
<b>Central Region</b>	<b>114,924 (2,394)</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1,915 (33)</b>	<b>-47%</b>	
Burundi	2,613 (152)	7%	3 (0)	NA*	3
Cameroon	38,988 (0)	NA*	588 (0)	-100%	3
Central African Republic	5,131 (65)	51%	67 (3)	200%	3
Chad	4,420 (111)	-16%	157 (4)	-64%	3
Congo	9,564 (235)	57%	134 (3)	NA*	3
Democratic Republic of Congo	27,572 (495)	10%	726 (9)	80%	3
Equatorial Guinea	6,780 (218)	14%	101 (3)	50%	3
Gabon	17,711 (1,051)	2%	106 (10)	67%	3
Sao Tome and Principe	2,145 (67)	-48%	33 (1)	NA*	3
<b>Eastern Region</b>	<b>462,026 (23,695)</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>8,434 (330)</b>	<b>-2%</b>	
Comoros	3,666 (31)	-9%	146 (0)	NA*	3
Djibouti	6,588 (320)	162%	64 (1)	NA*	3
Eritrea	3,118 (80)	-15%	7 (0)	NA*	3
Ethiopia	187,365 (11,898)	28%	2,659 (109)	-10%	3
Kenya	120,910 (7,674)	74%	2,011 (98)	165%	3
Madagascar	22,616 (1,029)	-28%	355 (21)	-38%	3
Mauritius	829 (63)	-50%	10 (0)	NA*	3
Rwanda	20,828 (642)	1%	290 (10)	-17%	3
Seychelles	3,770 (455)	25%	16 (0)	-100%	3
Somalia	10,085 (895)	3%	429 (62)	-5%	3
South Sudan	9,890 (336)	-51%	106 (2)	No change	3

<sup>4</sup> Data is continuously verified for accuracy and reliability, thus may change based on retrospective updates from Member States.

Sudan	31,147 (158)	-65%	1,986 (27)	-58%	3
Tanzania	509 (0)	NA*	21 (0)	NA*	3
Uganda	40,705 (114)	8%	334 (0)	NA*	3
<b>Northern Region</b>	<b>1,219,288 (18,563)</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>34,957 (639)</b>	<b>-4%</b>	
Algeria	116,065 (892)	-13%	3,057 (19)	-17%	3
Egypt	195,418 (4,494)	2%	11,598 (298)	-2%	2
Libya	152,510 (6,430)	0%	2,513 (111)	-3%	3
Mauritania	17,601 (163)	41%	446 (2)	No change	3
Morocco	491,709 (2,772)	2%	8,767 (44)	7%	2
Tunisia	245,923 (3,799)	-7%	8,569 (165)	-8%	3
Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic	62 (13)	86%	7 (0)	NA*	1
<b>Southern Region</b>	<b>1,890,005 (16,611)</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>59,122 (931)</b>	<b>15%</b>	
Angola	21,733 (353)	20%	527 (6)	-14%	3
Botswana	37,559 (2,560)	23%	485 (38)	12%	3
Eswatini	17,286 (49)	-8%	665 (4)	33%	3
Lesotho	10,535 (5)	-29%	309 (0)	-100%	3
Malawi	33,237 (406)	4%	1,096 (13)	-7%	3
Mozambique	66,212 (1,696)	-15%	746 (21)	-34%	3
Namibia	42,477 (1,277)	9%	492 (34)	70%	3
South Africa	1,537,852 (8,432)	1%	52,111 (785)	21%	3
Zambia	86,449 (1,652)	-30%	1,179 (21)	-38%	3
Zimbabwe	36,665 (181)	-15%	1,512 (9)	-50%	3
<b>Western Region</b>	<b>422,377 (9,540)</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>5,536 (153)</b>	<b>-6%</b>	
Benin	6,818 (317)	94%	90 (9)	NA*	3
Burkina Faso	12,535 (163)	-15%	145 (1)	No change	3
Cape Verde	16,491 (390)	22%	159 (3)	50%	3
Côte d'Ivoire	40,310 (2,657)	-2%	220 (9)	-18%	3
Gambia	5,255 (236)	4%	161 (8)	NA*	3
Ghana	89,787 (1,366)	1%	731 (26)	-32%	3
Guinea	18,877 (1,026)	No change	111 (8)	No change	3
Guinea-Bissau	3,568 (121)	-10%	55 (3)	No change	3
Liberia	2,042 (12)	100%	85 (0)	NA*	3

Mali	9,330 (417)	25%	368 (8)	300%	3
Niger	4,928 (68)	113%	185 (3)	-40%	3
Nigeria	161,737 (1,080)	-49%	2,030 (17)	-61%	3
Senegal	37,833 (941)	-9%	1,013 (50)	14%	3
Sierra Leone	3,948 (11)	-35%	79 (0)	NA*	3
Togo	8,918 (735)	20%	104 (8)	100%	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,108,620 (70,803)</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>109,964 (2,086)</b>	<b>2%</b>	

\*No new cases/deaths reported in the previous week.

## **NEW Africa CDC Response Activities**

### **General:**

1. Thursday 18 March 2021, Dr. John Nkengasong, the Director of Africa CDC hosted Africa CDC's weekly press briefing. The recording is available on the [Africa CDC Facebook page](#).
2. Africa CDC will host the Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) and COVID-19 Incident Management System webinar series on the topic, 'Logistics Function' on 25 March 2021 at 3pm EAT. Register [here](#).

### **Laboratory:**

1. To date, over 39.8 million tests for COVID-19 have been conducted across the continent with a positivity rate of 10.3% and test per case ratio of 9.7. For epi week 11, 846,284 new tests were conducted, which is an 11% decrease when compared to the previous week (945,890 tests).

### **Healthcare Preparedness and Medical Countermeasures:**

#### *Case Management*

1. Between 18-19 March 2021, Africa CDC's Case Management TWG conducted a COVID-19 vaccine online ToT in collaboration with Project HOPE and +University of New Mexico for 85 healthcare workers from Botswana, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia.

#### *Infection and Prevention Control (IPC)*

1. Last week, the IPC TWG and partners held the second session of the sixth webinar series titled "Measures for COVID-19 vaccination roll-out" for 565 English and French participants.
2. Africa CDC and partners will hold the 3rd session of the sixth IPC webinar series entitled "Optimising the Environment for IPC: Screening and Triage for COVID-19 and Ebola". The English session will be held on Wednesday 24 March 2021 at 1 pm EAT. Register [here](#). The French session is on Friday 26 March 2021 at 2pm EAT. Register [here](#).

### Sciences, Standards and Regulations:

1. Access the biweekly COVID-19 Scientific and Public Health Policy Update which is published every other week on Tuesdays at <https://africacdc.org/resources/> or the [WHO AFRO link](#). Subscribe [here](#) to receive the weekly Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) update and all other products or visit the [PERC](#) and [Africa CDC website](#).

### Recommendations for the Member States

1. Member States should continue to enhance their COVID-19<sup>5</sup> surveillance efforts to include:
  - a. Syndromic surveillance like influenza like illness (ILI) and severe acute respiratory infections (SARI).<sup>6</sup>
  - b. Rapid mortality surveillance that includes the collection, analysis and use of all-cause mortality data collected through the facility- or community-based surveillance.<sup>7</sup>
  - c. Genomic surveillance<sup>8</sup> to monitor variant presence and spread as well as the continued evolution of the virus.
2. Member States should continue to perform contact tracing<sup>9</sup> of confirmed cases based on transmission type and country capacity and enhance diagnostic screening efforts with the use of rapid antigen tests<sup>10</sup>.
3. All Member States should notify and routinely share data regarding confirmed COVID-19 cases, deaths, recoveries, tests conducted and healthcare workers infected with WHO and Africa CDC to continually inform these and other updates. Notify Africa CDC by emailing: [AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org](mailto:AfricaCDCEBS@africa-union.org).
4. Member States should continue to guide the general public about seeking immediate medical care for those who develop severe symptoms (i.e. difficulty breathing).
5. Member States should put in place or strengthen existing public health and social measures as cases start to rise.

### Resources for more information

- Africa CDC COVID-19 updates: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>
- Africa CDC Resources, policy guidelines, and infographics: <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>
- Partnership for Evidence-Based Response to COVID-19 (PERC) <https://preventepidemics.org/covid19/perc/>

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<sup>5</sup> [WHO COVID-19 Case definition](#)

<sup>6</sup> Africa CDC Protocol for enhanced surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa: [Protocol for Enhanced Severe Acute Respiratory Illness and Influenza-Like Illness Surveillance for COVID-19 in Africa – Africa CDC](#)

<sup>7</sup> Revealing the toll of COVID-19: A technical package for Member States – Africa CDC

<sup>8</sup> Genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2: a guide to implementation for maximum impact on public health

<sup>9</sup> Africa CDC Guidance on Contact Tracing for COVID-19 Pandemic: <https://africacdc.org/download/guidance-on-contact-tracing-for-covid-19-pandemic/>

<sup>10</sup> [Interim Guidance on the Use of Rapid Antigen tests for COVID-19 Response – Africa CDC](#)

- WHO. Technical Guidance. <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance>